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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3922nd meeting of the Security Council, held on 31 August 1998 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council expresses its deep concern about the current conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which poses a serious threat to regional peace and security. The Security Council expresses alarm at the plight of the civilian population throughout the country.

"The Security Council reaffirms the obligation to respect the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other States in the region and the need for all States to refrain from any interference in each other's internal affairs. In this context, the Council calls for a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of all foreign forces, and the initiation of a peaceful process of political dialogue with a view to national reconciliation. The Council expresses support for all the regional diplomatic initiatives aimed at a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The problems of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be solved on the basis of a process of all-inclusive national reconciliation which fully respects the equality and harmony of all ethnic groups and which leads to the holding of democratic, free and fair elections as soon as possible.

"The Security Council urges all parties to respect and protect human rights and respect humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977, as applicable to them. It condemns reported summary executions, torture, harassment and detention of civilians based on their ethnic origin, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the killing or wounding of combatants who have laid down their weapons, hate propaganda, sexual violence and other abuses by any side. In particular, the Council calls for the protection of the civilian population. It recalls the unacceptability of the destruction or rendering useless of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, and in particular of using cuts in the electricity and water supply as a weapon against the population. The Council reaffirms that all

persons who commit or order the commission of grave breaches of the above-mentioned instruments are individually responsible in respect of such breaches.

"The Security Council calls for safe and unhindered access for humanitarian agencies to all those in need in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It calls for unrestricted access by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to all detainees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It urges all parties to guarantee the safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

"The Security Council encourages the Secretary-General to continue to consult, as a matter of urgency, with regional leaders in coordination with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) about ways to bring about a peaceful and durable solution to the conflict, and to keep it informed about developments and his own efforts. It reaffirms the importance of holding an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region under the auspices of the United Nations and the OAU.

"The Security Council will follow the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo closely. It will remain actively seized of the matter."